

Appl. No. 10/673,994
Amdt. Dated June 20, 2006
Reply to Office Action of March 20, 2006

•••REMARKS/ARGUMENTS•••

The Official Action of March 20, 2006 has been thoroughly studied. Accordingly, the changes presented herein for the application, considered together with the following remarks, are believed to be sufficient to place the application into condition for allowance.

By the present amendment, the paragraph bridging pages 6 and 7 of the specification has been changed to include a description of the embodiment of the connection region 6 that is shown in Fig. 3.

In addition, the brief descriptions of Figs. 1 and 3 have been correspondingly amended on pages 3 and 4.

In addition, the Abstract has been changed to comply with the Examiner's request, including providing a clean copy of the Abstract on a separate sheet.

Also by the present amendment independent claim 1 has been changed to recite that the proximal end portions of the ribbon-like strips are "interconnected by the sheet-like connecting region," the distal end portions of the ribbon-like strips are "not directly connected to one another," and "the ribbon-like strips are only interconnected to each other at their proximal end portions."

Support for these changes to the claims can be readily found in the drawings.

In addition the term "individual ribbon-like strips" has been changed to "ribbon-like strips" in view of the Examiner's interpretation of the term "individual."

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Other changes to the claims address issues noted by the Examiner or otherwise correct matters of form.

It is believed that the changes presented herein for independent claim 1 are properly enterable after Final Rejection inasmuch as they primarily address the indefiniteness issues raised by the Examiner on pages 4 and 5 of the Office Action. That is, reciting that the ribbon-like strips are only interconnected to each other at their proximal end portions more clearly describes the pervious structural description of the "individual ribbon-like strips" having "free, unattached distal end portions."

As such, the changes to claim 1 address issues raised by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph and overcome the outstanding rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, thereby reducing issues that could otherwise go to appeal.

Likewise the other changes to the claims and specification address matters raised by the Examiner and were otherwise previously presented in applicants' previous amendment.

Entry of the changes to the specification, Abstract and claims is respectfully requested.

On page 2 of the Office Action the Examiner objected to the drawings, noting that the embodiment of the connecting region depicted in Fig. 1 was different from the connecting region depicted in Fig. 2.

In response to the objection to the drawings, the paragraph bridging pages 6 and 7 of the specification has been changed to include a description of the embodiment of the connection region 6 that is shown in Fig. 3 and the brief description of Fig. 1 and 3 have been correspondingly changed.

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On page 3 of the Office Action the Examiner objected to the Abstract because of the terminology used and a problem with the wording at lines 3-5.

By the present amendment the Abstract has been changed to address and correct the matters noted by the Examiner. Moreover, as requested, a clean copy of the Abstract is being provided on a separate sheet for the Examiner's convenience.

Also on page 4 of the Office Action the Examiner objected to claims 1-8. Under this objection the Examiner has included suggested changes for claims 1, 2 and 8 which applicants have adapted.

Claims 1-8 remain pending in this application.

Claim 1-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Under this rejection the Examiner has noted that she is interpreting the term "individual" in a manner which excludes the ribbon-like strips from being connected together.

In response to this rejection, the term "individual" has been canceled from the claims.

Also under this rejection the Examiner has inquired as to whether claims 7 and 8 were intended to include the body fluid absorbent article having an inner surface.

In response to the Examiner's inquiry, claims 7 and 8 have been changed to recite the combination of the article of claim 6 in combination with a body fluid absorbent article having an inner surface.

The amendments presented herein for the claims are believed to address and overcome the outstanding rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

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Claims 1-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Statutory Invention Registration No. H1585 to Ahr.

For the reasons set forth below, it is believed that all of the pending claims are allowable over Ahr and therefore, the outstanding rejection of the claims should properly be withdrawn.

Favorable reconsideration by the Examiner is earnestly solicited.

The Examiner has relied upon Ahr as teaching braided structures 44A-C which the Examiner has interpreted as being applicants' claimed ribbon-like structures.

The Examiner specifically relies upon Ahr as teaching:

...a urine guiding structure having longitudinal and transverse directions which includes a plurality of ribbon like strips having a thickness, as best understood, e.g. braided structures 44A-C or strands 54 which can be flat, having or arranged in longitudinal and transverse dimensions or directions, distal end portions, see Figures, especially 1 and 5, the structure(s) denoted 56, and proximal end portions, e.g. at least a proximalmost portion of the remainder of 44A-C or structures 54, and a sheet-like connecting region, e.g. any or all of the other sheet members of the article 20, e.g. core 42, which is interconnected directly or indirectly, see e.g., col. 8, lines 24-55 and col. 10, lines 47-58 of Ahr, to the proximal end portions of the strips.

It is noted that the Examiner has relied upon Ahr as teaching that "at least a proximalmost portion of the remainder of 44A-C or structures 54, and a sheet-like connecting region, e.g. any or all of the other sheet members of the article 20, e.g. core 42, which is interconnected directly or indirectly."

On page 5 of the Office Action the Examiner has interpreted applicants' claim language as not requiring "that the strips only include proximal and distal end portions, that the entire extent of the

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proximal end portions are directly interconnected to the connecting region, or that the strips are only connected to one another through the connecting region to one another."

In response to the Examiner's interpretation of the claims and reliance upon Ahr, independent claim 1 has been amended herein to recite that the ribbon-like strips are only interconnected to each other at their proximal end portions.

The Examiner has relied upon Ahr as teaching that "at least a proximalmost portion of the remainder of 44A-C or structures 54, and a sheet-like connecting region, e.g. any or all of the other sheet members of the article 20, e.g. core 42, which is interconnected directly or indirectly."

However, as disclosed, in Ahr the braided structures 44A-C or structures 54 are interconnected throughout the length of the braided structures and not only interconnected at the proximal end portions according to applicants' amended claims.

Ahr fails to teach applicants' claimed structure and therefore cannot be relied upon as anticipating or otherwise rendering obvious applicants' claimed invention.

Based upon the above distinctions between the prior art relied upon by the Examiner and the present invention, and the overall teachings of prior art, properly considered as a whole, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner cannot rely upon the prior art as required under 35 U.S.C. §102 as anticipating applicant's claimed invention.

It is, therefore, submitted that any reliance upon prior art would be improper inasmuch as the prior art does not remotely anticipate, teach, suggest or render obvious the present invention.

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It is submitted that the claims, as now amended, and the discussion contained herein clearly show that the claimed invention is novel and neither anticipated nor obvious over the teachings of the prior art and the outstanding rejection of the claims should hence be withdrawn.

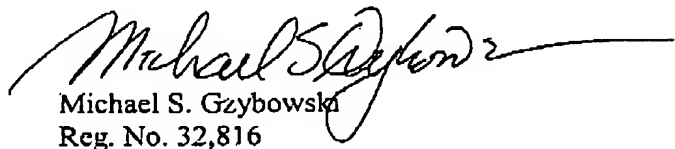
Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejection of the claims and an early allowance of the claims is believed to be in order.

It is believed that the above represents a complete response to the Official Action and reconsideration is requested.

If upon consideration of the above, the Examiner should feel that there remain outstanding issues in the present application that could be resolved, the Examiner is invited to contact applicant's patent counsel at the telephone number given below to discuss such issues.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR §1.136 is hereby made. Please charge the fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 12-2136 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,


Michael S. Gzybowski
Reg. No. 32,816

BUTZEL LONG
350 South Main Street
Suite 300
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104
(734) 995-3110

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